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C. VENEZUELA: LAST WEEK, VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS CONCLUDED DRUG CARTELS ARE NOW OPERATING IN VENEZUELA. THE SURGE IN QUANTITY OF SINGLE SEIZURES, NOW THOUSANDS OF KILOGRAMS AS OPPOSED TO AVERAGE SINGLE SEIZURES OF LESS THAN 10 KILOGRAMS LAST YEAR, INDICATES THE STRONG PRESENCE OF COLOMBIAN CARTELS IN THE COUNTRY. NOT ONLY HAS VENEZUELA BECOME A TRANSSHIPMENT CENTER, BUT IT IS ALSO USED TO STORE DRUGS FOR REDISTRIBUTION. PAYMENTS OF MILLIONS OF BOLIVARS ARE MADE AT THE BORDER TO ALLOW LARGE SHIPMENTS, LIKE THE TON OF COCAINE SEIZED IN EARLY MARCH, TO ENTER THE COUNTRY. ONLY A LARGE COLOMBIAN, VENEZUELAN-CRIMINAL, OR JOINT COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN CARTEL CAN AFFORD THESE PAYMENTS. THE JUDICIAL POLICE (PTJ) RECENTLY ARRESTED THE OPERATIONS CHIEF FOR PABLO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA AT A RANCH IN GUARICO STATE, AND DETERMINED THE AIRSTRIP ON THE RANCH IS THE SAME ONE USED TO BRING THE TON OF COCAINE SEIZED IN MIRANDA STATE INTO VENEZUELA. IT WAS ALSO USED TO TRANSFER THE COCAINE SEIZED IN MIAMI A WEEK EARLIER. THE PTJ AND NATIONAL GUARD BELIEVE THE VENEZUELAN COCAINE SEIZURE, ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIAMI COCAINE SEIZURE, ARE PART OF A LARGER SHIPMENT, REPORTED TO BE 10,000 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE, BELONGING TO ESCOBAR.

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